

Talbot County Tourism Board
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 14, 2020
8:30 a.m.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81101841522?pwd=TGhySHI5T2RWbE5iVjA0VVJCaGwwUT09>

Meeting ID: 811 0184 1522
Password: 624719

I. Call to Order

Chairperson Judy Bixler called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m.

Board Members Present: Judy Bixler, Kelley Cox, Angela Eade, Ian Fleming, Laura Price, Jeff Schneider, Ben Simons, Kim Weller, Cassandra Vanhooser

Board Members Absent: Harold Klinger, Mark Salter, Al Silverstein

Recording Secretary: Candace Harris

II. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the September meeting were presented. Ian Fleming moved that the minutes be accepted with any necessary corrections. Ben Simons seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

III. Old Business

Talbot CARES Grant Program: Ms. Vanhooser reported that there are now 104 grant applications and over half of those are tourism-related businesses. Talbot County has been able to reinvest back into the businesses. She reported that the Emergency Operations Center private-sector call is every second and fourth Tuesday at noon. Jeri Cook, Talbot County's elections director, talked about the election process on this week's private-sector call.

Frederick Douglass Park on the Tuckahoe: Ms. Vanhooser reported that a public meeting for Frederick Douglass Park on the Tuckahoe would be October 24, 2020, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The meeting also will be presented on Zoom for those who are unable to meet at the park. Work is continuing to complete the master plan and interpretive plan. The hope is to have it done by the end of the year, to set up for grant season next year. She reported that the interpretive panels have been installed and the signs look very good.

IV. New Business

2020 Tourism Tax Code Numbers: Ms. Vanhooser reported that she has sent Board members the 2020 numbers. Talbot County is down 11.4%, which is what was expected.

2021 Travel Guide: Ms. Vanhooser explained to board members that Chesapeake Bay Magazine won the bid to produce Talbot County's vacation guide for three years, beginning in 2020. Once the pandemic hit, Ms. Vanhooser and publisher John Stefancik decided that instead of printing a guide they would produce 14 pages of editorial for the June issue of the magazine, and the cover also featured Talbot County. The feedback on this piece has been excellent, but the issue of what to do for 2021 must be decided soon.

Ms. Vanhooser asked Mr. Stefancik to submit a proposal for the 2021 travel guide. Mr. Stefancik's proposal was to do a beautiful, perfect-bound magazine on Talbot County that would feature 64 pages of editorial and approximately 20 pages of advertising. This guide would not have any listings. The cost of this proposal is about \$75,000.

An "evergreen" guide that would be usable for two to three years seems like the best option for the coming year, Ms. Vanhooser said. She also asked the board to consider allowing real estate advertising in the guide to help offset the cost. She noted that to make the guide affordable, selling advertising is essential. Ms. Vanhooser asked the board to decide two things: 1) if they approved the idea for the 2021 guide, and 2) if they wanted to reconsider allowing real estate advertising.

Chairman Bixler asked for a motion on proceeding with a 2021 guide. Mr. Schneider made the motion to proceed with a second by Mr. Klinger. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Simons made a motion that the guide to be opened to real estate advertising; Mr. Fleming seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Restaurant Week 2021: Ms. Vanhooser noted that the COVID-19 public health crisis has disproportionately affected hospitality and tourism, in Talbot County and around the world. She then asked the board if they wished to consider holding a Restaurant Week promotion in 2021. Ms. Vanhooser pointed out that Talbot County had a Restaurant Week for 10 years, but the board voted to discontinue the promotion because of lack of interest from the industry. Mr. Fleming observed that such promotions keep the industry "top of mind" more than they drive revenue. He suggested a Restaurant Week promotion be held in May of 2021. Ms. Vanhooser will work with Ian and Mark to do a survey to see what type of support we will have for a Restaurant Week event.

Nominations for Open Positions: The Board has three open positions. Mr. Silverstein will be retiring in December and the Talbot County Chamber of Commerce will be asked

to nominate a person for his board position. Ms. Vanhooser has talked to several people to gauge their interest in joining the board. Jessica Bellis with the Avalon Foundation has expressed interest in the county-wide cultural attractions position. Other names that emerged include Ms. Kristen Greenaway from the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum and Michael Hoffman from the Inn at Perry Cabin. Ms. Cox suggested someone from Wade's Point. Mr. Jeff Schneider said that he would be interested in switching board positions in order to fill the positions. Mr. Fleming said that he would also be willing to switch positions to fill the open spots. The board agreed to proceed with the recommendation of Jessica Bellis, and she will reach out to others.

Visitor Center: Ms. Vanhooser asked to table the future of the Visitor Center for a later discussion as the meeting was running long. Ms. Price asked if there is an opportunity to design a spot for the Visitor Center at the Community Center. Judy Bixler and Cassandra Vanhooser will meet with County Manager Andy Hollis to discuss and bring back to the board next month.

- V. Representatives from each of the towns reported on news and events taking place in their jurisdictions.
- VI. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9:56 am. The next meeting will be held on November 11 at 8:30 a.m.